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ABSTRACT

A practicum was developed to address deficiencies in students' writing skills. The program goals were to assess the students' abilities to use prewriting strategies, to use supportive elements in writing, and to evaluate students' progress using pre- and post-attitude surveys and writing samples. The target group was 20 eighth-grade journalism students with mixed socio-economic backgrounds. During the 12-week implementation period, journalistic skills geared towards producing an issue of the school newspaper were the focal point of the students' writing efforts. Students worked individually and in small groups to complete activities which focused on writing skills at the prewriting stage. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the program included analyses of data, a comparison of the writing samples using the rubric designed by the Florida Writing Assessment program, and attitudinal surveys completed by the students. Results indicated improvements in writing skills achievement and attitudes. Three tables of data are included; the Florida Writing Assessment rubric, survey instruments, pre- and posttests, and an editorial chart are attached. Contains 17 references. (Author/RS)

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A FOCUS ON USING PREWRITING AND KNOWLEDGE LEVEL
STRATEGIES AND SKILLS TO IMPROVE THE
ATTITUDES AND WRITING SKILLS
OF MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

by

Kelli Morrison LaRoche

A Practicum Report

Submitted to the Faculty of the Center for the
Advancement of Education of Nova University in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Science.

The abstract of this report may be placed in a National
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Abstract

A Focus On Using Prewriting and Knowledge Level Strategies and Skills to Improve the Attitudes and Writing Skills of Middle School Students.

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Descriptors: Writing Skills/ Prewriting/ Writing Strategies/ Writing Evaluation/ Writing Assignments/ Writing Attitudes/ Writing Improvement/ Critical Thinking/ Middle School/

This practicum was developed to address deficiencies in students' writing skills. The program goals were to assess the students' abilities to use prewriting strategies, to use supportive elements in writing, and to evaluate students' progress using pre and post attitude surveys and writing samples. The target group was twenty eighth grade journalism students with mixed socio-economic backgrounds. During the twelve-week implementation period, journalistic skills geared towards producing an issue of the school newspaper were the focal point of the students' writing efforts. Students worked individually and in small groups to complete activities which focused on writing skills at the prewriting stage. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the program included analysis of data, a comparison of writing samples using the rubric designed by the Florida Writing Assessment program, and attitudinal surveys completed by the students. The results indicated improvements in writing skills achievement and attitudes. Appendices include: Florida Writing Assessment rubric, Writing Skills Analysis Survey, Writing Portfolio Organizational Chart, Prewriting Pre-Test, Prewriting Post-Test, and Editorial Chart.

Authorship Statement

I hereby testify that this paper and the work it reports are entirely my own. Where it has been necessary to draw from the work of others, published or unpublished, I have acknowledged such work in accordance with accepted scholarly and editorial practice. I give this testimony freely, out of respect for the scholarship of other workers in the field and in hope that my work, presented here, will earn similar respect.

Kelli Morrison LaRoche

Document Release

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Kelli Morrison LaRoche

December 1, 1993

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CHAPTER I

Background

This study was conducted on a randomly selected group of twenty eighth-grade students, residing in a densely populated, middle income, suburban community. The community, encompassing a 14 square mile area, has a total population of 50,828. The racial breakdown of the community includes 93.8 percent White, 10.1 percent Hispanic, and a Black minority of 3.3 percent (Selected Population and Housing Characteristics, 1990). About 23 percent of the middle school students in this community are from low income families (1991-1992 Florida School Report).

The educational improvement project was conducted at a middle school with 1,271 sixth through eighth grade students. The student population was 85 percent White, 10 percent Hispanic, 4 percent Black, and 1 percent Asian (1991-1992 Florida School Report). There are 91 faculty members at the school site which includes 10 teachers in the Language Arts program. The school's readiness to use up-to-date technology was evident in its student-per-computer ratio of 5:1. Class sizes for academic subjects ranged from 30 to 35

students.

The proposal author has been a faculty member at the site as a seventh grade reading teacher for two years and as a sixth, seventh, and eighth grade journalism teacher for three years. The role of the author involves instruction of two sixth, seventh, and eighth grade journalism courses. In the elective curriculum, students are taught in a heterogeneous grouping situation. The curriculum for the journalism courses taught was developed independently by the author, who incorporates supplemental projects, such as the school newspaper and the yearbook, into the coursework and as after school activities.

The educational background of the author includes a Bachelor of Arts degree in Liberal Arts and 30 credit hours of course work necessary to complete a Master of Science degree in English Education. The experiences in the journalism classroom with the processes and products of writing have shown a need for improvement in the clarity and focus of the students' writing.

Through the experiences and responsibilities of producing the school newspaper and yearbook, the author identified the necessity for a more intense

instructional focus on students' writing skills. The development of proficiency at the prewriting stage, assisted students in becoming more effective, skilled writers. With the incorporation of a wide variety of research techniques and approaches of instruction for the knowledge level and prewriting stages, students were offered a better balanced writing curriculum.

Problem Statement

The process of writing involves skills and techniques with which one puts ideas down on paper. To be successful in this process, the student must be able to collaborate ideas and organize information to produce cohesive, meaningful prose. Successful writers rely on knowledge, experience, and research to provide a background from which written communication can be created.

In Florida, an annual writing assessment is given to students in the fourth, eighth, and eleventh grade. Out of the 1,549 eighth grade students tested in the target school's county in 1993, 32 percent of the students received a satisfactory score of four or higher. Based upon the results of the Florida Writing

Assessment Program from 1992, only 1.1 percent of the students evaluated received the highest mark available which demonstrates proficiency in focusing on the writing topic, extensive supporting ideas, organization, and effective use of writing conventions. The majority of the students evaluated, 55.7 percent, were at the next to lowest level. The students' writing was characterized with little focus, unsatisfactory support of ideas, poor organization, and frequent errors in writing conventions (Florida Department of Education, 1992).

Following the scoring rubric designed by the Florida Department of Education for the Florida Writing Assessment Program (Appendix A:46), the author evaluated the writings of 20 students at the target school and found that 35 percent of the students' samples received a satisfactory score of three or four. The statistics of students' writing skills in Florida correlates to the inadequacies of the skills throughout the nation and supports the author's theory that an intervention must take place to implement researched strategies and techniques to improve student writing skills.

The targeted students involved in this practicum included 20 eighth graders ranging from ages 13 to 14. The students' academic abilities range from regular to gifted levels. The students' involvement in this practicum was based upon their enrollment in the elective journalism program.

Through an emphasis on writing skills in the journalism curriculum, the author identified the need to provide students with the skills to become more proficient writers. Many times, the students with poor writing skills are not struggling with the knowledge of their topic, but with the technique of identifying and putting that knowledge into writing. The frustration students feel toward the inability to mold and manipulate ideas and information is evident in the attitudes the students have towards writing experiences.

Evaluation of a group of 30 students from the previous school year completing the Writing Skills Analysis Survey (Appendix B:48) at the school site for the proposal revealed a majority of the students in the target population have negative attitudes towards writing and writing abilities. Table 1 illustrates the

range of scores, 0 to 7, with 0 representing complete confidence and enjoyment in writing and 7 representing a dislike for writing and dissatisfaction in writing abilities.

Table 1.
Scores from Writing Skills Analysis Survey

SCORE	# OF STUDENTS	%	SCORE	# OF STUDENTS	%
0	2	7	4	5	17
1	2	7	5	4	13
2	4	13	6	3	10
3	5	17	7	1	3

Attitudinal surveys, interviews, and observations at the proposal site indicated a dissatisfaction in students' writing skills that needed to be addressed. Statistics revealed that 68 percent of the eighth grade students evaluated in a writing assessment at the studied school received unsatisfactory scores. The observations and data reflected the necessity for

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educators to restructure the approaches to writing instruction and focus on strategies and techniques to make students proficient and capable writers.

Interviews with teachers at the school site indicated a general dissatisfaction with the students' writing skills. The teachers observed students' writing skills were weak in a variety of areas, including at the prewriting and knowledge level. The teachers all agree that the alarming statistics and the students' performance in writing show evidence that there is a necessity for remediation and improvement.

When faced with a writing assignment, students often experience "writer's block." This occurs as a result of an insufficient reservoir of knowledge regarding the subject. Teachers can assist students in overcoming these obstacles by providing a variety of skills and prewriting techniques to offer alternatives in writing. Strategies and activities that focus on prewriting and organizational knowledge skills such as brainstorming, clustering, mapping, charting, and freewriting may present students with ideas when facing obstacles in writing. Activities should be designed to provide students with the experience and skills

necessary to overcome the frustrations they may feel when given a writing task.

Through learning and experiences in the author's course of study, a necessity for the focus on students' writing became evident. As an educator of English and language skills, the author needs not only to provide students with information, but with skills and strategies to manipulate that information and gain experience using the knowledge. By targeting the weaknesses and inabilities that students have in manipulating their writing skills, the author intended to develop and improve the capabilities students have producing written communication.

The target students were not able to produce clear, focused, and meaningful writing. Because a program emphasizing prewriting and knowledge level strategies was not available at the school site, the practicum was intended to provide writing instruction to affect up to 50 percent of the target students by improving the attitudes, prewriting skills, or clarity in the processes of writing.

Outcome Objectives

Due to the need for an improvement in students' writing skills, the practicum author developed a pilot program. The program focused on the development of writing skills and strategies at the prewriting and knowledge level of thinking and writing. A collaboration of critical thinking and skill development activities from research was designed into instructional materials to assist the author in attaining the desired outcome objectives.

1. At the end of the twelve-week implementation, 50 percent of the 20 target students will demonstrate 100 percent proficiency in using at least three of the prewriting strategies and critical thinking skills learned in the pilot program as determined by teacher judgement of student writing samples obtained on a weekly basis and through assessment of prewriting techniques demonstrated in the Prewriting Pre and Post Tests.

2. At the end of the twelve-week implementation, 20 percent of the 20 target students in the pilot program will use more supportive elements in writing as

measured by the assessment rubric based upon the standards and scoring scale of the Florida Writing Assessment Program (Appendix A:46) and based upon a comparison of writing samples obtained at the beginning and end of the implementation period.

3. At the end of the twelve-week implementation, 30 percent of the 20 target students in the pilot program will display a more positive attitude towards writing as evidenced by an improvement in at least five of the 20 items on the Writing Skills Analysis survey (Appendix B:48) and by teacher observations of student attitudes towards writing assignments throughout implementation of the pilot program.

CHAPTER II

Research and Solution Strategy

Related Research

Writing is a skill that can ensure student success in every aspect of learning and advancement. The skill of writing is transferred through the curriculum and subject areas, and affects a degree of the success a student experiences in a subject. A program developed to teach how to use written language across the curriculum should enable students to use the skills as writers for many purposes.

The history of writing instruction illustrates the fluctuation of attitudes educators have held towards the teaching and learning of writing. During the 1950s a general dissatisfaction existed among educators concerning the writing skills of students. In the 1960s, skills were viewed with more satisfaction, so much so, that freshman writing courses were eliminated from programs at many colleges. In the 1970s and 1980s, Tchudi and Mitchell (1989:192) verified the concern for unacceptable writing skills became a focus once again.

Each year researchers and educators assess the

development and needs of student writers. A trend has been established to identify the strengths and weaknesses in the techniques and skills students utilize in the process of writing. Both national and local statistics illustrate the urgency in recognizing the necessity of implementing new approaches to improve and develop writing skills in students of today.

According to the United States Department of Educational National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) survey, only 18 percent of the eighth graders tested were able to write satisfactory samples of expository type writing. "The U.S. ranks 49th among 158 member nations of the U.N. in its literacy levels" (Kozol, 1985:5). The National Center for Research in Vocational Education provides statistics which reflect "... the number of functionally and marginally illiterate adults at approximately 60 million, one-third of the adult population in the United States" (Fields, Hull, Sechler, 1987:29).

Just as Abraham Maslow described a hierarchy of needs that affect motivation, there is a hierarchy of thinking skills that enable students to become quality thinkers. "Marshaling ideas" and being able to

organize them is the first necessity for an effective experience in writing. The foundation of intellectual thought and academic processing is found in Benjamin Bloom's 'knowledge level' of learning. Students not mentally prepared at this level will face an unfocused collaboration of thoughts that could be successfully organized into well-developed writing. Tchudi and Mitchell (1989:200) suggested that "... not only is all writing creative, all writing is research into one's own experiences and feelings into how knowledge 'out there' fits into an understanding of the world."

Steele and Steele (1991:41) stated students must be taught "... how to become aware of their thoughts and feelings and how to organize them to effectively communicate them through their writing." The incorporation of critical thinking skills at the prewriting and knowledge level of writing will provide students with the ability to effectively receive and generate data. A variety of critical thinking strategies can be used by students in order to manipulate and organize information using prewriting techniques. The Florida Newspaper in Education Coordinators, Inc. (1987:1) designed objectives for the

Standards of Excellence in Writing based upon the premise that "... Writing is a process which is creative and synthetic. We must fight illiteracy on a grand scale. Our job as educators is to prepare students for life ...".

Confusion and uncertainty frequently characterize students' approach to writing activities. The inability to organize knowledge and thoughts leaves many students disillusioned to the writing process. By directing and emphasizing skills involved at the prewriting stage of the writing process, students will develop the confidence and ability to produce organized and meaningful writing. Tompkins and Camp (1988) described the approach students take toward the writing process as a series of stages that must be used collaboratively. Before moving efficiently through the writing stages, students must feel firmly skilled in the foundation level, the prewriting stage. Techniques such as brainstorming, clustering, freewriting, mapping, and charting offer students the abilities to gather a well-based knowledge of the writing topic.

Rico (1985:126) described clustering as an effective critical thinking tool as it "... helps

writers learn to connect thoughts, feelings, ideas, and memories in patterns not used before. It enables students to generate ideas, to structure them loosely, and to discover in them a tentative shape that allows writing to flow."

A well-developed writing product illustrates a concordant awareness of the topic. Organized writing shows consistent use of related, supporting ideas and materials to the topic. Transitional statements and a structure that sustains the topic demonstrating proficiency in organization was emphasized in the student instruction phase of the practicum. The prewriting techniques described by Steele and Steele (1991) utilize critical thinking skills to foster quality thinking techniques in students. The prewriting technique of clustering required students to recognize patterns of ideas and establish relationships in their thinking. The strategy demonstrates how teaching students prewriting skills can structure a well-formed base of writing, as well as teaching organizational writing skills.

Teaching prewriting techniques is a very complex process. Educators should approach prewriting

objectives in a creative and organized manner. An atmosphere designed for success as described by Olson (1987) must be established, and assurance that improved results will occur must be incorporated into the attitudes of the educator as well as the student. Prewriting facilitates both the process and the product of writing. Confidence in skills assists students in discovering what they want to say and how they want to say it.

Often educators focus students' prewriting experiences on techniques such as outlining. Outlining frequently proves to be inadequate for preparation in writing. A student must collect information and distinguish relevant from the irrelevant facts to the writing task. An effective strategy as described by Rae (1990) incorporates using the "writing wheel" technique. Similar to clustering, the "writing wheel" gives students an opportunity for a more in-depth analysis of personal knowledge to communicate. Focusing on a thesis statement and a word describing the essence of the topic, students gather and organize information to support the subject.

Creating situations to ensure students have a

successful experience when writing will foster positive attitudes for future writing assignments. Professor Douglas was a pioneer in the development of the theory of understanding writing as a process rather than a product. Douglas described the steps of the writing process and argued that "... teachers should be much more concerned with helping students master the essential skills and general processes of writing than with teaching specific forms or products" (Tchudi and Mitchell, 1989:193). Tchudi and Tchudi (1984) explained students feel they have the most to say about themselves. By writing from personal experiences, students will feel more confident and successful in organizing ideas and knowledge regarding the writing topic. Positive, successful experiences will filter over into future writing tasks.

Writing about topics such as people, places, events, memories, inspirations, favorites, questions, and goals in their lives will present the students with an endless array of topics for writing assignments. Once a writing topic is determined, the student can use a prewriting technique to begin to organize ideas and information to be presented in the writing. Tchudi and

Tchudi (1984) suggested students freewrite about the topic to "unblock" their minds. Upon completion of the freewrite, the students should search through the list and use the chosen ideas to begin writing. A concern should not be placed upon spelling or conventions at this point in the writing, but on the ideas presented.

Technology and assessment play a vital role in creating successful student writers. Software programs are available to educators that demonstrate strategies and offer suggestions to students as they are organizing information. Assessment statistics offer a knowledge base which teachers should consult when developing a program of techniques to develop prewriting skills in students.

Technology has revolutionized the process of writing. Writing tasks are approached differently using a computer. Tasks, such as checking spelling, grammar, and revising, once faced with frustration and monotony are now quickly handled using writing-focused software. IBM compatible writing software includes Writing Assistant, PFS:Write, and Microsoft Word for Windows. These programs are helpful in assisting students to create effective, meaningful writing.

Prewriting strategy and organizational techniques have been incorporated in developmental writing programs to allow students to utilize technology in enhancing their writing skills. In a program directed by Jim Roth (1986:1), computers were used to "... lead the student through a series of prewriting questions that required thoughtful answers before the actual writing process began. Using the speed and versatility of the computer to provide the student with a simple, time-saving method of brainstorming and structuring..." can provide them with the essential skills to be effective writers.

Roth (1986) developed the program through the use of computers to provide assistance to students at the prewriting level. As students began developing ideas based upon the writing topic, the computer would ask thought-generating questions concerning the needs and interests of the writer regarding the topic. The assistance provided by the computer was a type of brainstorming activity which helped to structure the student's ideas. At the end of the session, a printout would be produced to enable the student to further analyze the thoughts and ideas that were produced. The

results of the program for writers utilizing the computer's assistance at the prewriting stage enabled students to focus on a writing topic quickly and satisfactorily. A program offering this type of assistance, as well as the benefits offered by the word processing packages mentioned, could offer a variety of opportunities to students producing writing assignments.

In assessment considerations, a focus should be made on the statistics and information representing the inadequacies plaguing students in writing skills. The Florida Department of Education report, *Florida Writes!* (1992), frequently discusses the importance of being able to focus on the writing topic and using prewriting activities. The document stated that effective writing remains focused and is supported through the use of details and examples. Students should maintain constant awareness of the topic in writing. Focusing on the skills involved in prewriting should enable students to become more proficient in developing an awareness of the topic.

Another area of assessment to be considered is the method and manner educators take toward the evaluation

of student writing. According to Gilbert (1990), educators must find a way to focus evaluation of student writing on content, rather than the conventions of writing. During evaluation, educators need to ask if the writing demonstrates a clear awareness of the topic, the audience, and the fluency of ideas. Is there a necessity for more information, support, or clarity? If so, the student would benefit by having instruction in prewriting skills to produce effectiveness in defined writing areas. Although the described areas of evaluation might be difficult and time consuming, the benefits presented for students' writing would promote success.

Solution Strategy

Tompkins and Camp (1988:214) described how "Writer's block afflicts experienced writers as well as beginning writers. The difference is that experienced writers use a variety of strategies to overcome their blocks and write successfully."

With the urgency illustrated in the declining status of literacy in our nation and in our schools, teachers should strive to provide students with a variety of writing strategies that ensure an experience

of success. Successful experiences will offer a foundation in which to build an accumulation of skills and techniques that students can use to further expand writing abilities. When students have a reservoir of techniques to utilize in writing, they are more apt to experiment and examine further creative avenues in which to guide their skills.

A variety of skills and experiences is what makes the student the type of writer that is successful. The confidence and experience students gain using established skills helps to create the type of positive attitude that extends to further concept learning and academic skills. Students comfortable and equipped with knowledge are more likely to extend their capabilities to include new ideas or concepts.

Since writing is an educational skill expanding to the total curriculum, it is an important skill to strengthen. It was the author's intention for the students participating in the practicum to not only see an improvement in writing skills, but in personal attitudes towards writing itself. Students became proficient and less apprehensive writers by learning how to tap the vast amount of knowledge or capacity for

knowledge available. The expansion of skills not only made them better writers but also confident in their capabilities as learners.

Writing instruction to develop students' skills at the knowledge and organizational level prepares them to be more knowledgeable about writing topics. The knowledge and organizational levels must be satisfactorily mastered before students can approach the higher level of thinking skills such as application, analysis, synthesis, or evaluation. Students must have a firm grasp of their comprehension and knowledge of a particular concept or topic before they can be expected to develop further with learning. A goal of writing instruction is to develop the skills in students to enable clear communication and skillfully written format.

Students frequently approach writing tasks with confusion and frustration. Students may feel they have nothing to offer towards the topic. A focus was placed on the skills students possess in creating writing which emphasizes organization and clarity as evidenced by Tompkins and Camp (1988). The ideas and suggestions mentioned in the review described practical prewriting

techniques. The objectives in education regarding writing supported the idea that students need the advantage of prewriting skills in order to be successful writers. Although consensus exists, focus on prewriting techniques in writing instruction is limited. For this reason, the author of this practicum developed a program for prewriting skill focus.

The curriculum created for the practicum, "Enrichment for Writing Program", was provided with a well-balanced foundation of knowledge level and prewriting skills, the researched strategies and techniques to give students strengths in approaching the process of writing.

Statistics and data from writing assessments play a fundamental role in evaluating the strategies necessary for teaching writing. Data from the findings are instrumental in restructuring the focus on the writing skills taught. Educators must not only consider the researched information, but must also analyze roles as assessors. Many suggestions are available on alternatives that can be taken to evaluate student writing.

The benefits of a program that emphasizes knowledge

level skills and prewriting techniques should prove to be an asset for students needing to be successful writers. The skill of writing will have a long-lasting effect that will be pervasive not only throughout students' educational experience, but into adulthood.

The technique of Rae's writing wheel (1990) provides students with an opportunity to analyze a collaboration of thoughts and ideas in order to produce a foundation of information necessary to create organized and effective writing. The "writing wheel" technique allows students to organize and analyze knowledge and information allowing them to identify patterns and relationships in thinking. A variety of prewriting strategies, including clustering and brainstorming, allows for the association of critical thinking skills and the organization of writing.

Educators have a responsibility to open the doors of knowledge and information to students. The responsibility also lies in the premise of preparing students in comprehending a workable knowledge level to expand thinking. Without this level of comprehension developed, students are unsuccessful in writing; writing is unintelligible and undeveloped.

The Enrichment for Writing Program emphasized the skills necessary to absorb knowledge level information and recognize useful data and enabled students to become better prepared as writers. Once students felt they had a firm grasp on what was needed to extend information, apprehension when facing writing tasks diminished.

Factors exist which affect a student's inability to have successful writing experiences. Issues contributing to the problem of writing are students' ideas being unorganized, unfocused, and undeveloped. A lack of successful experiences in writing results in negative attitudes. If educators set up writing assignments designed to produce a feeling of accomplishment, the students are more likely to respond positively to other writing tasks. Many educators focus efforts on teaching students how to write a sentence or a paragraph, how to outline, or how to create a topic sentence. In the author's opinion, students would be successful in writing if instructed how to develop a base of skills assisting in organizing information and gathering thoughts on a topic. A variety of techniques can be utilized to assist the

educator in effective writing skill instruction.

The goal of education is to provide students with skills to enable them to be successful in life. The skills of quality thinking and effective writing will interfuse into many aspects of students' lives. Educators should provide students with a variety of thinking and writing strategies to ensure successful experiences. The successful experiences will be the foundation for an accumulation of skills and techniques students can use to further expand writing abilities.

CHAPTER III

Method

The Enrichment for Writing Program designed for this practicum encompassed a twelve-week period. In this program, the 20 target students used writing portfolios to organize and maintain evidence of writing skill improvement. A two-week period was utilized at the beginning and at the end of implementation for organization, pre-test, and post-test purposes. The eight-week period involving the action and instructional phase of the program focused on the identified student prewriting and knowledge level skills needed to lead to the successful attainment of the proposal objectives.

The author's role in the practicum was to assess and monitor the writing skills of the 20 target students. A weekly assessment of the students' writing folders was conducted to monitor improvement and participation. A variety of materials and strategies was used for instruction with the students. Many of the materials were adopted or adapted from research conducted for the practicum, as well as materials designed by the author. By serving as an instructor

and a guide, the author assisted in developing the skills of students to ensure individual success with the Enrichment for Writing Program.

One of the end products from implementation of the practicum was a successfully produced issue of the school's newspaper. The effective writing of the students was published and distributed, free of charge, to over 1,500 students, parents, and community members. The principal of the school provided authorization for the publication of the project, and results will be shared with the superintendent, the area-assistant superintendent, and the school board members of the district.

The implementation of the Enrichment for Writing Program followed the format outlined below.

Week 1 and Week 2

During the first two weeks of implementation, the eighth grade students' writing skills were analyzed and assessed. An initial writing sample was produced on the first day of class. The students worked collaboratively to write a biographical sketch based upon information gathered in an interview of a class peer. Individual student writing portfolios were

organized; all writing samples were recorded weekly by the students on the organizational chart (Appendix C: 51). The chart was monitored by the author on a weekly basis.

Two other writing samples were produced during the first two weeks. One sample was designed for students to choose a writing prompt, based upon a chosen topic, without the benefit of any prewriting strategy or skill instruction. After completion of the first two writing samples, the students completed a self-evaluation called the Writing Skills Analysis Survey (Appendix B: 48), assessing personal attitudes and strengths in writing. The second writing sample was completed by the student after instruction by the author on freewriting and clustering prewriting strategies.

The end of the two-week initiation period resulted in a Prewriting Pre-test (Appendix D:53) to determine the students' skill level and experience in using identified prewriting strategies.

Week 3

During the third week of implementation, the students utilized the prewriting skill of charting to

organize their thoughts. Using the strategies involved in charting, the students relied on their critical thinking skills to determine information which was relevant or irrelevant to the successful completion of the writing task. One example of a charting activity involved using the Editorial Chart (Appendix F:57) to organize and analyze information necessary to create an effective editorial. A variety of materials was utilized to provide prompts for writing activities including photographs, newspapers, and short articles. The writing samples were incorporated into the students' writing portfolio and monitored by the author.

Week 4

During Week 4 of the Enrichment for Writing Program, the prewriting strategies of freewriting, mapping, and charting were utilized by students for assistance in producing writing styles needed for production and completion of the school newspaper. The prewriting strategies used assisted the students in organizing ideas, information compiled on interviews, and research conducted. The writing samples produced

were incorporated into the students' writing portfolio and monitored by the author.

Week 5

At this point in the implementation phase, the students utilized brainstorming, clustering, and freewriting to produce the last writing samples produced before beginning the production of the school newspaper. The writing produced during this week involved the students' personal opinions and reactions to issues and situations.

It was necessary for the students to call upon critical thinking skills in evaluating ideas and knowledge about the writing topics. The "writing wheel" technique was utilized to help students in questioning the purpose of ideas that will go into their writing.

The writing samples produced were incorporated into the students' writing portfolio and monitored by the author.

Week 6

At this stage of implementation, a midway

evaluation was conducted to determine the progress of the Enrichment for Writing Program. An analysis of the students' writing portfolio was conducted to determine if any supportive instruction or activities were necessary.

Week 7 - Week 10

During Week 7 through Week 10, the students utilized the prewriting and knowledge level skills and strategies acquired to produce articles for the school newspaper. One article was turned in each week, including the accompanying prewriting activity that was used to develop the article. During the assessment portion of the practicum, the articles produced during weeks 7 - 10 were used to determine the improvement made in the students' writing skills.

Week 11 and Week 12

During the final two weeks of implementation of the Enrichment for Writing Program, the students organized and analyzed the individual progress made in class. Writing samples that were produced at the beginning of

the program were compared to the selections completed for the production of the school newspaper.

A Prewriting Post-test (Appendix E:55) was given to the students to evaluate their proficiency in using the varied prewriting strategies that were taught during the Enrichment for Writing Program. The students also completed the Writing Skills Analysis Survey (Appendix B:48) to reassess their attitudes towards the writing process. Comparisons of the pre and post tests were analyzed by the author.

The variety of strategies and activities involved in the Enrichment for Writing Program provided the participating students the skills necessary to become proficient in writing. Through individual, group, and whole class activities, the program gave the students a variety of opportunities to use skills in a variety of experiences. The success that the students had using the prewriting strategies and skills acquired helped to improve their attitudes towards writing and developed confident, able writers.

CHAPTER IV

Results

A variety of evaluation and assessment tools were utilized to determine the achievement and success of the practicum. The evaluation process focused on determining changes made in three areas; the students' proficiency in using prewriting strategies during the writing process, using prewriting strategies to develop writing by using additional supportive elements in writing, and in improving the students' attitude towards the writing process.

Objective One

In evaluating the proficiency level at which the students use prewriting strategies during the writing process, a pre-test and a post-test were given (Appendices D:53 and E:55). The students produced writing samples, using prewriting techniques, that demonstrated the utilization of prewriting activities in the development of writing. The results indicate that the author's instruction in prewriting skills and strategies improved the abilities in students to utilize prewriting techniques more proficiently in the

writing process.

Upon completion of the post-test on the recognition and utilization of prewriting strategies, a comparison was conducted by the author to determine the target students' improvement. Prewriting strategies produced for students' writing activities were assessed for clarity and effectiveness. At the end of the implementation, 95 percent of the target students were able to effectively use at least three prewriting strategies.

The scores illustrated in Table 2 support the findings that the target students were now able to recognize and utilize prewriting strategies more effectively and knowledgeably at the end of the implementation process.

Table 2.
Prewriting Skills - Pre and Post-Test Results

ID	PRE	POST	ID	PRE	POST
1	2	6	11	3	6
2	6	6	12	1	6
3	1	6	13	5	6
4	2	6	14	0	5
5	3	5	15	0	5
6	1	2	16	4	4
7	0	5	17	5	6
8	2	6	18	4	5
9	1	6	19	4	6
10	0	5	20	2	5

Objective Two

The assessment rubric that was used to determine student improvement of using additional supportive elements in writing samples was based upon the standards and scoring scale of the Florida Writing Assessment Program (Appendix A:46). Writing samples produced at the beginning of the implementation process were compared to samples produced at the end of the phase. The comparison demonstrated how the utilization of prewriting strategies by the students helped them to organize and analyze thoughts during the writing process and produce well-developed and supported writing.

To complete the assessment for this objective, the author evaluated a writing sample produced by the students before the implementation process began. The writing was assessed for the focus and support presented in the writing. Details in the writing used to explain, clarify, or define were noted. The earlier produced samples were compared to writing samples produced during the implementation process. The improvements noted in the students' use of supportive elements in writing are illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3.
Using Supportive Elements in Writing

ID	W.S. #1	W.S. #2	ID	W.S. #1	W.S. #2
1	1	3	11	0	2
2	3	5	12	4	7
3	3	5	13	3	7
4	1	5	14	1	4
5	2	2	15	1	7
6	4	6	16	1	7
7	1	4	17	4	7
8	1	6	18	1	2
9	3	7	19	2	3
10	2	4	20	2	5

(W.S. - Writing Sample)

Objective Three

To assess the students' attitudes toward the writing process, the Writing Skills Analysis Survey (Appendix B:48) was completed at the beginning and at the end of the implementation phase. Based upon the comparison of both surveys, it is evident that the students' attitudes improved based upon the development of confidence in the skills and successful experiences using the acquired prewriting strategies and techniques. Thirty percent of the 20 target students displayed a more positive attitude towards writing as evidenced by an improvement in at least five of the 20

items on the Writing Skills Analysis survey (Appendix B:48). Even more impressive is the fact that each one of the target students had at least one improving or positive remark to make about their attitude towards writing at the end of the implementation phase. With the improvements in students' attitudes towards writing and writing skill ranging from 15 to 35 percent, it is apparent that through the development of prewriting skills and the successful writing experiences that the skills produced, the students who participated in the Enrichment for Writing Program feel more confidence and satisfaction in their writing abilities.

The variety of evaluation tools used in assessment of the effectiveness of the implementation phase provided an abundance of useful data in determining the success of the Enrichment for Writing Program. Through observation, statistical data, writing sample comparisons, and student-evaluation, the effectiveness of the practicum experience was operatively determined.

CHAPTER V

Recommendations

Upon completion of the implementation and evaluation phase of the Enrichment for Writing Program, the author intends to make the data and materials available for use in the English department at the school site. A handbook of the materials and strategies used in the project could be compiled and made available for teachers to incorporate into classroom writing instruction. A similar handbook could be designed for student use, providing information and enrichment activities that would be useful in writing skills practice. The project, along with the school newspaper, will be circulated to administrators and professionals in the county.

It is the author's intention to increase the awareness of educational professionals of the necessity for focused instruction in the writing process at the prewriting level. The simplicity of the focus in the project offers the opportunity for an expansion of the Enrichment for Writing Program to be easily adaptable to other instructional situations. Information from the project can be offered to a variety of English

journals for publication consideration. The development of inservice workshops to present strategies and techniques would be an effective method of providing useful information to educators about the project. By making the project's data and instructional materials available, the strategies and practices can be effectively incorporated into a variety of teaching situations throughout the county, creating a widespread effort and improvement in students' writing skills.

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APPENDICES

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APPENDIX A

Florida Writing Assessment rubric

APPENDIX A

Florida Writing Assessment Program rubric
(Focus and Support elements)

Focus	Focus refers to how clearly the paper presents and maintains a clear main idea, theme, or unifying point. Papers representing the higher end of the point scale demonstrate a consistent awareness of the topic.
Support	Support refers to the quality of the details used to explain, clarify, or define. The quality of the support depends on word choice, specificity, depth, accuracy, credibility, and thoroughness. Papers representing the higher end of the scale provide examples and illustrations in which the relationship between the supporting ideas and the topic is clear.

APPENDIX B
Writing Skills Analysis Survey

APPENDIX B
WRITING SKILLS ANALYSIS SURVEY

NAME _____

PERIOD _____

DIRECTIONS: Below are a series of statements about writing. There are no right or wrong answers to these statements. Check the answer to the statement as it applies to your attitude towards writing and your writing skills.

- | | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| ☐ Yes | ☐ No | 1. I am confident with my writing skills. |
| ☐ Yes | ☐ No | 2. I enjoy expressing my ideas through writing. |
| ☐ Yes | ☐ No | 3. I am nervous about having my writing evaluated. |
| ☐ Yes | ☐ No | 4. I like discussing my writing with others. |
| ☐ Yes | ☐ No | 5. I would enjoy seeing my writing published. |
| ☐ Yes | ☐ No | 6. I enjoy writing better when I work with others. |
| ☐ Yes | ☐ No | 7. I enjoy writing outside of school. |
| ☐ Yes | ☐ No | 8. I like criticism about my writing. |
| ☐ Yes | ☐ No | 9. It takes me a long time to finish a writing assignment. |
| ☐ Yes | ☐ No | 10. I put a lot of effort and time into a writing assignment. |
| ☐ Yes | ☐ No | 11. I don't know where to begin when starting a writing assignment. |

- ☐ Yes ☐ No 12. I have a hard time getting my message across in writing.
- ☐ Yes ☐ No 13. I use or have used prewriting activities to help organize my thoughts in writing.
- ☐ Yes ☐ No 14. When doing a writing assignment, I just start writing until done.
- ☐ Yes ☐ No 15. I wish I were a better writer.
- ☐ Yes ☐ No 16. Prewriting strategies like clustering help me in writing.
- ☐ Yes ☐ No 17. Organizing my ideas by using prewriting strategies makes me feel less nervous about writing.
- ☐ Yes ☐ No 18. I feel confident using prewriting strategies.
- ☐ Yes ☐ No 19. Developing my skills in the following areas would make me more confident as a writer.
 -a clear focus on the message
 -an awareness of the topic
 -more mature writing
20. My last grade in English was _____.

Please write one comment about your attitude towards writing and your writing skills.

APPENDIX C
Writing Portfolio Chart

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APPENDIX C

WRITING PORTFOLIO CHART

NAME _____

PERIOD _____

[illegible]

APPENDIX D
Prewriting Pre-Test

APPENDIX D

Prewriting Pre-Test

DIRECTIONS: The Prewriting Pre-Test is designed to evaluate your prewriting skills abilities. The grade you receive on this pre-test will not count against you. This test will be used to determine your strengths and weaknesses in using prewriting strategies.

1. Define PREWRITING _____

2. Name two prewriting strategies. _____

3. What are prewriting strategies used for? _____

4. Do you use prewriting techniques when writing? _____
5. Which prewriting strategies do you use? _____

6. Pretend you have to write an essay about your feelings on year-round school. Use the space below to organize your ideas using a prewriting strategy.

APPENDIX E
Prewriting Post-test

APPENDIX E

Prewriting Post-test

DIRECTIONS: The Prewriting Post-test is designed to evaluate your prewriting skills abilities. The grade you receive on this post-test will not count against you. This test will be used to determine your strengths and weaknesses in using prewriting strategies.

1. Define PREWRITING_____
2. Name two prewriting strategies_____
3. What are prewriting strategies used for?_____
4. Do you use prewriting techniques when writing?_____
5. Which prewriting strategies do you use? _____
6. Pretend you have to write an essay about your feelings on year-round school. Use the space below to organize your ideas using a prewriting strategy.

APPENDIX F
Editorial Chart

APPENDIX F
EDITORIAL CHART

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TOPIC

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OPINION

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SUPPORT

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CONCLUSION

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